

## **IN THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, in this application.

1. (currently amended) A method for preparing shredded cheese, the method comprising:
  - (a) shredding cheese;
  - (b) conveying the shredded cheese to a revolving tumbler;
  - (c) adding an anticaking agent to mix with the shredded cheese in the tumbler;
  - (d) spraying an aqueous composition comprising natamycin and a thickening agent with spray nozzles onto the mixture of anticaking agent and shredded cheese in the tumbler, wherein the natamycin is dispersed in the aqueous composition and the thickening agent prevents clogging of the nozzles during spraying; and
  - (e) transporting the shredded cheese from the tumbler to filling equipment.
2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the thickening agent is a gum.
3. (previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the gum is a xanthan gum, a gellan gum, or a combination thereof.
4. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the concentration of natamycin in the aqueous composition is from 0.1 to 20 grams/liter.
5. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the concentration of the thickening agent in the aqueous composition is from 0.5 to 50 grams/liter.
6. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the anticaking agent is selected from the group consisting of microcrystalline or powdered cellulose, starch, modified starch, sodium silicate, magnesium silicate, potassium silicate, zinc silicate, silicon dioxide, kaolin, talc, potassium carbonate, magnesium carbonate, sodium phosphates, potassium phosphates, and calcium phosphates.

7. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the aqueous composition is sprayed onto the mixture of anticaking agent and shredded cheese in an amount between 0.01% and 5% (v/w).

8. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the natamycin is sprayed onto the mixture of anticaking agent and shredded cheese in a final concentration between 2 and 40 ppm.

9. (currently amended) A method for preventing nozzle clogging during treatment of shredded cheese, the method comprising: spraying an aqueous composition comprising natamycin and a thickening agent with spray nozzles onto shredded cheese, wherein the natamycin is dispersed in the aqueous composition and the thickening agent prevents clogging of the nozzles during spraying.

10. (previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein the thickening agent is a gum.

11. (previously presented) The method of claim 10, wherein the gum is a xanthan gum, a gellan gum, or a combination thereof.

12. (previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein the concentration of natamycin in the aqueous composition is from 0.1 to 20 grams/liter.

13. (previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein the concentration of the thickening agent in the aqueous composition is from 0.5 to 50 grams/liter.

14. (previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein the method further comprises adding a dry powder composition comprising an anticaking agent to the shredded cheese.

15. (previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the dry powder composition is added to the shredded cheese before the shredded cheese is sprayed with the aqueous composition.

16. (previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the anticaking agent is selected from the group consisting of microcrystalline or powdered cellulose, starch, modified starch, sodium silicate, magnesium silicate, potassium silicate, zinc silicate, silicon dioxide, kaolin, talc, potassium carbonate, magnesium carbonate, sodium phosphates, potassium phosphates, and calcium phosphates.

17. (previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein the aqueous composition is sprayed onto the shredded cheese in an amount between 0.01% and 5% (v/w).

18. (previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein the natamycin is sprayed onto the shredded cheese in a final concentration between 2 and 40 ppm.

Claims 19-23 (canceled)